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ABSTRACT

A process oriented technical writing course was devised at the University of Alaska to counteract the "forms" approach and to include peer critiques and student participation in class grading. Modifications to the standard syllabus included (1) student analyses of their own writing processes through literacy autobiographies, (2) student interviews with practitioners in different fields to identify types and kinds of writing done in those fields, (3) discussions of paper types and textbook readings leading to student-generated critique sheets, (4) conference based reviews of peer-completed critique sheets, and (5) compilation of extensively revised, carefully self-evaluated portfolios of technical writing (graded at midterm and at semester's end). By sharing the first two assignments in peer writing groups, students learn that they have many writing experiences in common (e.g. writing block) and also find that most professionals in their fields spend over 50% of their time in writing-related activities. Students produce drafts at three levels: rough (self-critiqued outside of class), professional (submitted for class critiquing), and portfolio (turned in for a grade). This critiquing cycle ensures that each paper undergoes multiple revisions. The class-generated evaluation guides rate attributes of each paper type, and emphasize the importance of communicating to a broad audience. Portfolios include earlier drafts, a prompt-assisted student self-evaluation, and a self-grade. (Peer evaluation checklists, portfolio cycle flow chart, student writing excerpts, and assignment sheets are included.) (JG)

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Paper presented at the Penn
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Revising the Technical Writing Class:

Peer Critiques, Self-Evaluation and Portfolio Grading

Technical writing classes are often presented by textbook writers or even by English Departments as forms classes. Students from various disciplines meet together to learn the conventions of business writing in general or of the technical field they are majoring in. Such an orientation often results in a product oriented syllabus and an overemphasis on writing structure at the expense of writing content and writers' growth and development. Current research in the field suggests that these classes should be revised to support "the common rhetorical principles that underlie the design and development of all writing" (Tebeaux 423).

Modifying my upper division technical writing class to include peer critiques and student participation in class grading through self-evaluation and portfolio grading, I was able to move the class from a product to a process orientation while retaining necessary department-developed assignments such as business letters; a feasiblity study; a formal, researched report, etc.

To begin, I reviewed my Department's technical writing syllabus, and I found that some of my preconceptions were confirmed: I was required to teach certain "types" of papers. And

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the book, Reporting Technical Information by Houp and Pearsall, had been ordered for me. Furthermore, when I discussed the class with students, I found that they had similar preconceptions: they expected to find out the tricks of the writing trade for their field. They expected to find these tricks ready at hand in the textbook and to apply them algorithmically under my guidance.

Additionally, however, I found room for change. I wanted to sequence our classroom writing according to priorities set by Mayher, Lester, and Pradl in their book Learning to Write/Writing to Learn. Mayher, Lester and Pradl suggest that students will need to achieve writing fluency, clarity, and correctness in that order. Reviewing the Houp and Pearsall text, I found a great deal of support for developing writing clarity and correctness and much less for developing students' writing fluency. Therefore I took the development of writing fluency as my challenge; I would try to add to the class in that area and to do so, revision became my working metaphor. Without diluting an already full syllabus, I needed to revise the classwork to allow for multiple drafting of papers and ungraded, supportive readers' responses to student writing.

I will admit that I immediately began by diluting the syllabus to the extent of dropping one paper type--I believe it was a comparison/contrast paper. Knowing these papers were taught in our freshman sequence, I had few qualms about doing so. By improving the overall quality of the remaining class papers

through review and revision, I could justify a reduction in quantity. And, having made a space in the syllabus that could be spread out over the semester, I added the following:

1. Students analyzed their own writing process through the use of literacy autobiographies.

2. Students researched the kinds and types of writing done in their fields by interviewing practitioners in those fields.

3. Discussions of paper types and textbook readings led to the development of student-generated critique sheets. Additionally, each paper written by a student was critiqued by classmates and by me, using these sheets.

4. Critique sheets were reviewed with students in conference.

5. Students' class work culminated in an extensively revised, and carefully self-evaluated portfolio of technical writing which was reviewed and graded twice: once at mid-semester and again at the end of the semester.

I would like to describe briefly, the development of student work in each of these areas and I have provided you with three handouts that I hope will clarify my descriptions.

Literacy Autobiographies and Professional Interviews

Writing a literacy autobiography can be a short or a long term project. For the purposes of a technical writing class, I ask students to write responses to a set of questions about their past and present writing process, writing experiences, and reading experiences. Patrick Hartwell, in a forthcoming article

in Rhetoric Review, "Creating a Literate Environment in Freshman English: Why and How" claims that writing a literacy autobiography allows students to develop a metacognitive awareness of their writing which is an aid in beginning to view themselves as successful writers. Literacy autobiographies can take varied forms, depending on the number and focus of prompt questions. Here are three of mine:

1. Have you done any writing for a job? Describe the types of writing you did (memos, reports, and so on). Who did you write for?
2. How do you get ideas or inspiration for writing? How do you get started? Get down to what you really do (take a walk, avoid, stare into space, make lists, drink coffee, what else?).
3. What do you think makes writing good? What does one need to become a good, successful writer? Can everyone be a good writer?

Next, each student is required to interview a practicing professional in his or her field and to write up the results of the interview in an informal, one to two page document. Again, to focus the interview, prompt questions may be used. Generally, I want students to collect actual estimates of time on the job spent in writing and writing related tasks so I ask them to find out the types of writing done (memos, reports, feasibility studies, letters, and so on) and the amount of time spent writing (twenty hours per week, six hours per day, and so on). Additional questions might focus on the writer's writing process, audience awareness, revision practices, and preferences for dictation, typing, word processing, and so on. Here is an excerpt from one

such interview:

> I interviewed Dan Gorman, a computer instructor with Tanana Valley Community College with an M.A. in education....We began very basic and I asked Dan about writing in general. Dan enjoys writing a great deal although he admits most of his writing is work related. Dan estimated his time on work related writing to be about 20 hours a week. Most of that consists of memos, proposals, and classroom assignments....Dan, like everyone else I know, admits that deadlines are the single most important factor in completion of a paper. He told me that he rationalizes by prioritizing his projects and writing is usually one of the last things on his list. Dan feels that right now his writing is lacking due to the conditions he is forced to write in. He likes a quiet environment to compose and that just isn't available to him....My closing question to Dan was what he thought had helped him most to improve his writing. A resounding WORD PROCESSOR was his response.

Both of these short response assignments, literacy autobiographies and interviews with professionals, are used to aid in the formation of peer writing groups. I also use the interviews to assure skeptical students that they will be doing a great deal of writing in their future professions for I have rarely encountered an interview that reported that less than 50% of time on the job was spent in writing related activities. To make this point as effectively as possible, I make a chart of all

the interviews that details writing type and writing time and circulate this chart to the class. Students then find that lawyers and lab supervisors and teachers and Marine Corps Captains all write regularly and at length (see Appendix 1).

Writing Peer Groups

By sharing literacy autobiographies, students in a writing peer group of three to five individuals, quickly break down barriers and find that they have common fears and hopes about writing. They realize that many of them have experienced writing block or suffered through a hated composition class or enjoy particular types of writing but not others or that each has a varied and valuable field of study which will require his or her writing expertise. In the same way, sharing their interviews, allows students to see what is similar in the technical writing requirements across fields: they will all be writing a lot and need to be fluent, and they will be writing in many of the same, traditional, forms, predominately memos and reports. There is a great deal of literature on the use and efficacy of writing peer groups and papers on this topic will be presented at other sessions of this conference. I myself follow the peer group models of Carl Rogers, Kenneth Bruffee, and Thom Hawkins. Writing peer groups are a good vehicle for using writing critique sheets which, as you will remember, was the next point of change that I wish to cover.

Drafting and Critiquing

Students need to be trained to develop critiquing abilities

and to value drafting and revising their work. Research into the problems of basic writers shows us that most basic writers have underdeveloped revision strategies. And most of us, whether basic or expert writers, improve our work as we rethink, revise, and reformulate our written ideas.

I begin my course by drawing distinctions between types of drafts. This allows students to understand that a single paper will probably be revised several times and ties into the portfolio presentation of their work which will be the last topic of my talk today. Figure 1 on your handouts is a sample of the draft levels that I discuss with my students and includes a set of possible readers for each level.

Figure 1: Draft Levels for Technical Writing Portfolios

Definitions:	Readers:
a) ROUGH DRAFT: a rough draft is a piece of writing in process; it will be readable and understandable to the writer. It will be accessible to an outside reader; however, it may be in pen or pencil or typed and may not be completely formatted.	writer; writer's friends; writing center tutors
b) PROFESSIONAL DRAFT: a professional draft has gone through several revisions. It will be carefully developed, proofread, typed, and formatted but the writer will expect to improve the piece after receiving class or instructor critiques.	classmates; teacher; writer's friends or writing tutor
c) PORTFOLIO DRAFT: a portfolio draft will have gone through <u>several</u> drafts. It will present a writer's best effort to that point in time. It will be carefully developed, proofread, typed, and presented according to the assignment format. However, a mid-semester portfolio draft may still go through further revision at the writer's discretion.	classmates; teacher; other teachers (if paper is used in other courses); employer or professionals in writer's field

All students are expected to write a rough draft of any given paper, outside of class time. On regularly set due dates, a further draft (which may be a 2nd or a 10th revision, depending on the student) is turned in for class critiquing and this draft is labeled a professional draft. The draft will be thoroughly critiqued but not graded; however, a draft of this quality must be turned in in order for the paper to be eligible for inclusion in the portfolio. Without such a required due date, the portfolio method can be abused by a student who attempts to turn in a lot of poorly conceived writing at the last minute.

Any paper that ends up in the mid-semester or end of semester writing portfolio has gone through a critiquing cycle, outlined in Figure 2 in your handouts.

Figure 2: Training Steps: Peer Groups and the Critique Cycle

1. Students interview professionals in their field — share results with group and write
   Students write literacy biography — group documents (TRAINING STEP)
2. Students read text — develop critique sheets
   Students read sample paper
3. Students critique sample paper using critique sheet (TRAINING STEP)
4. Students critique peer papers using critique sheet
5. Teacher critiques student papers using critique sheet
6. Student/teacher conference to review critique sheets and discuss possible paper revisions

** Steps 2, 4, 5 (6 optional) occur on each professional draft
** Steps 1 and 3 need only occur once for training purposes

First, (Step 1) as mentioned above, students learn to work in groups

by sharing literacy autobiographies and interviews with professional writers. Then, (Step 2) students read the textbook and a sample paper. Sometimes, for training purposes, students critique a sample paper using a previously developed critique sheet (Step 3); one from an earlier class will do. Finally, (Step 4) after critique sheets are developed in class--a process that I will describe in a moment--students critique each others papers either by exchanging individually or by working in peer groups, having previously made copies of a paper for each group member. Finally, (Step 5) the teacher critiques the paper, using the same critique sheet and the sheets are reviewed with the writer in a student/teacher conference (Step 6). As you can see from Figure 2, certain steps may be dropped out or modified; I have only tried to present a sample critique cycle which should and may be adapted to your own class purposes.

After the paper has gone through a critiquing cycle, the professional draft will be revised into a portfolio quality draft. If the critiquing cycle has been effective, voluntary revision will usually take place because the writer wants to improve the piece and also now sees the direction for such improvement.

Information on critiquing can be found in several sources. I find Mary Beavan's article "Individualized Goal Setting, Self-Evaluation and Peer-Evaluation" and Charles Cooper's "Holistic Evaluation" both found in Cooper and Odell's 1977 NCTE publication Evaluating Writing very useful. Cooper explains the differences between holistic, dichotomous, and primary trait essay scoring and these methods can be adapted for developing formats for critique sheets. Two of these sheets can be found in your handouts, labeled Figure 3.

Figure 3: Sample Critique Sheets for Technical Writing

Use this sheet to help you offer an evaluation of the CORRESPONDENCE assignment to other members of the class. You may wish to evaluate the cover letter and resume separately or as a single document.

EVALUATION CHECKLIST:

Attributes	Numerical Evaluation (5-1; 5 is high)
Paper is CONCISE clear, avoids jargon and cliche, uses passive verbs only as needed	
Few or no problems with MECHANICS spelling, grammar, word choice	
Writer used an appropriate STYLE Tone: personal, confident, enthusiastic, professional, Sentences: mixture of short and long; balance of I/you	
Writer used appropriate TECHNICAL FORMAT paper is typed on good quality paper, plenty of white space, observes business/technical letter conventions	
The CONTENT of the writing is appropriate conventional opening, body, closing information is included; style supports the content; <u>from the point of view of the reader, all necessary information is included</u>	

On the reverse side, write a brief evaluative paragraph to the writer: what is strong, what could be improved, etc. Give an overall paper rating on a scale of 5-1 (5 is high).

Date: _____ Your name: _____
Writer's name: _____

Use this sheet to help you offer an evaluation of the PROCESS DESCRIPTION assignment to other members of the class. Please be supportive in your written comments.

EVALUATION CHECKLIST

	YES	NO		
CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION	_____	_____	1.	Paper is a process description.
	_____	_____	2.	Necessary steps of process are included (intro, theory, etc.) This will vary by paper audience and topic.
	_____	_____	3.	Content is appropriate to stated audience.
	_____	_____	4.	From audience's point of view, all necessary information, (as well as tips, warnings, etc.) is included.
	_____	_____	5.	Chronological order used as needed.
	_____	_____	6.	Paper moves well from beginning to end.
MECHANICS STYLE AND FORMAT	_____	_____	7.	Spelling rules are observed.
	_____	_____	8.	Punctuation rules are observed.
	_____	_____	9.	Wording clear and well developed.
	_____	_____	10.	Active voice and imperative mood are used appropriately as needed.
	_____	_____	11.	Format: paper is easy read and well-spaced.
	_____	_____	12.	Graphs, charts, table, and/or illustrations are well used and clearly labeled.
RESPONSE	_____	_____	13.	The process is interesting and/or useful.
	_____	_____	14.	If the process description is of the practical, how-to variety, it could be followed with success by the intended reader.

Written Evaluation: use the back of the paper to write a brief evaluative paragraph to the writer. What is strong? What could be improved?

Date: _____ Your Name: _____

Writer's Name: _____

Developing Critique Sheets

To develop a critique sheet, students read a textbook discussion of a particular paper type, say process description, and then take home and read a sample student-written process description. Additionally, they might be asked to find and bring to the next class session a process description that they have found useful, such as computer program documentation, directions for using their stereo equipment, and so on.

After completing this or similar preliminary research into process descriptions, as a class or in small groups, we list attributes of a successful process paper on the chalkboard, and then organize these attributes, prioritizing or weighting them.

Before leaving the classroom, I copy the chalkboard lists onto a piece of paper which I will retype into a class-generated evaluation guide like the examples you have before you. When possible, I give each student a copy of the checklist to use for proofreading his or her own paper before it is brought in for class critiquing. These are the same forms that are used in the critiquing cycle for that particular paper.

There are some clear benefits to having students develop and create their own evaluation sheets. Among them: students participate in class on a more equal basis with the teacher; students have a chance to clarify writing type, audience, and purpose during the discussions; students take responsibility for the assignments by participating in the shaping and development of the assignment; students learn critiquing criteria and begin, comfortably, to critique

their own work. Finally, by reviewing several peer-completed critique sheets with the teacher during conference, students learn that a successful paper communicates to and pleases a broader audience than simply teacher-as-examiner, to use James Britton's phrase.

Portfolio Evaluation

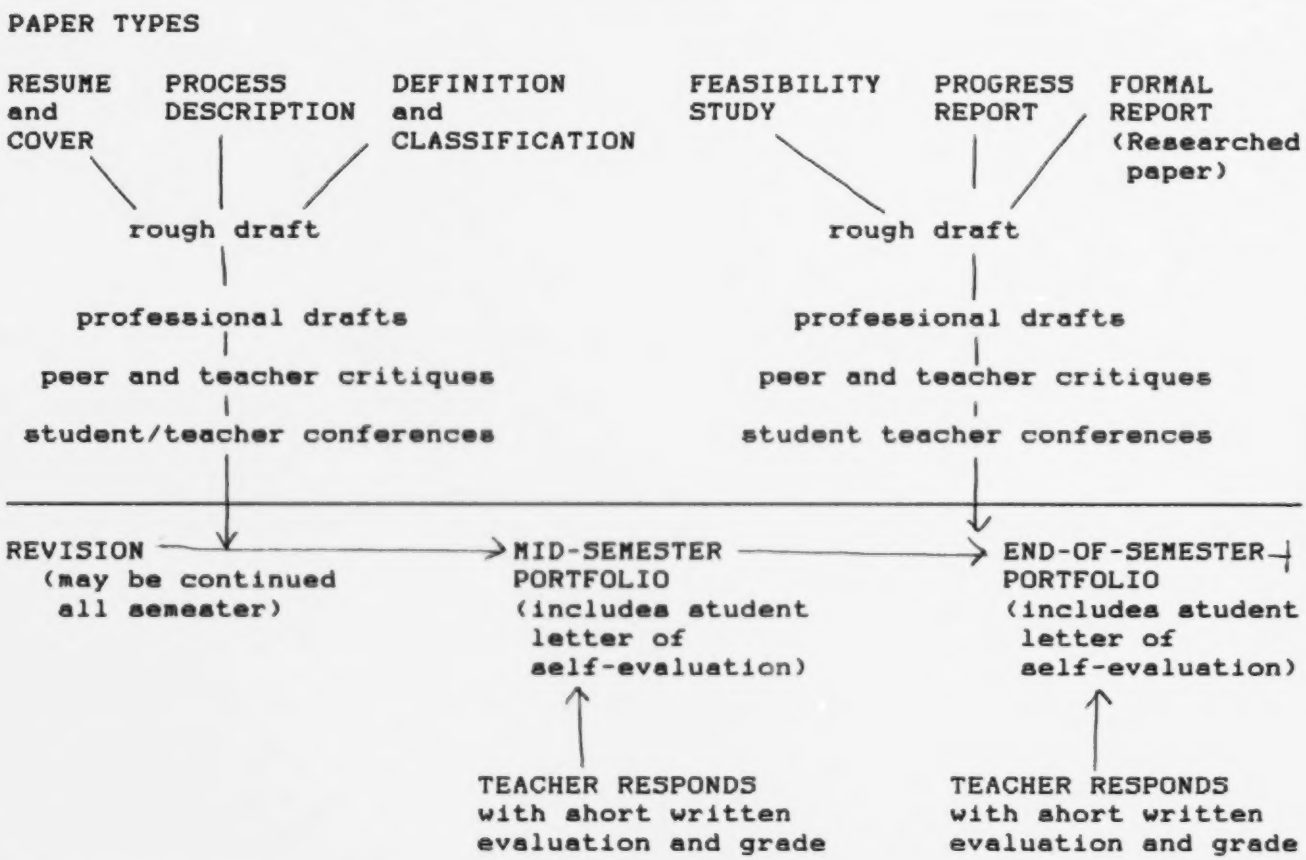
Inclusion of a portfolio evaluation system for mid- and end-of-semester grading was the final revision I made to my technical writing class. My interest in portfolio presentation of work began early. As an undergraduate art major, I was familiar with this method for presenting art projects in art classes. As a graduate student in creative writing, my final class presentations often took this form. And finally, as I talked to several friends who had obtained work as professional writers, especially in the field of computer documentation and advertising, I found myself admiring their professional portfolios of ad copy and published articles. I realized that I too hoarded my professional, published writing--articles, poems, short stories--in much the same way. And I began to develop a portfolio method for my composition classes, asking students to save drafts and to show me their work-in-process at several points during the semester.

In a recent article, "Portfolios as a Substitute for Proficiency Examinations," Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff detail the portfolio evaluation method used at SUNY--Stonybrook, and this article helped to solidify my system. At Stonybrook, they use portfolios as a proficiency exit test in freshman composition sections. At the end of the semester, students present a selection of class essays written and

revised with an instructor's help and guidance. The portfolio also includes an essay of self-evaluation, a student's reflection on his or her own writing.

If you look at Figure 4: Sample Portfolio Cycle for Technical Writing, you will see how such a portfolio may be organized for a technical writing class.

Figure 4: Sample Portfolio Cycle for Technical Writing



For this Figure, I have simplified my class syllabus to include only six papers. Other classwork, including a group-written report and

an oral report, has been left off for the sake of illustrating the portfolio sequence. In other words, a greater or lesser number of papers can be incorporated into a portfolio at the teacher's discretion.

Each paper in my students' portfolios has undergone a MINIMUM of three drafts. The rough draft, completed by the student outside of class, a professional draft which is thoroughly critiqued by classmates and by me, and the portfolio draft which is a revised version of the professional draft. At mid-semester, professional drafts for all papers completed to that point, let's say three, are submitted to me in a two-pocket folder. One pocket contains these carefully presented portfolio drafts and the other pocket contains earlier drafts for each assignment and a student-written letter of self-evaluation, including a self-grade.

To help students write a letter of self-evaluation, I give them a prompt sheet asking them, among other things, to discuss each assignment individually or the portfolio as a whole and to evaluate their growth as writers from the beginning of the class (see Appendix 2). Additionally, they are encouraged to describe their class participation, attendance, readings, and so on. The prompt sheet, therefore, helps them understand the criteria for assigning a self-grade. Mid-semester self-evaluation letters vary greatly from student to student as each discovers what it is like to talk professionally about his or her own writing. Letters average 1/2 to 1 1/2 pages and I respond to them with a 1/2 to 1 page letter of my own, addressing points in their letter, commenting on their work, and

explaining the criteria for assigning their mid-semester grade. Here is an excerpt from a student's mid-semester letter:

> Looking at the three assignments I have received back, I would give myself a B or maybe a B+. Of course, my goal is to receive an A. I think I can improve my writing to that level by the end of the semester. I can tell already that the class is helping me. I feel more confident that I am, to some extent, an expert in my field and have something to say about it. I also feel the ideas flowing easier as each assignment builds toward our term paper.

As you can see from Figure 4, the portfolio evaluation process is repeated at the end of the semester. Students again turn in a portfolio. This time, they also include their mid-semester self-evalutation and my response and a second, end-of-semester, letter of self-evalution. Again, I read the portfolios and respond briefly by letter. Here is a sample of an end-of-semester letter from the same student that I quoted above:

> I think the most valuable part of the class for me, besides the experience of trying the different types of technical writing, had to be the reviewing of my rough drafts by the others in the class and you. In other classes I have turned assignments in only to get them back with marks on them telling me something was wrong. But most times I never knew how to correct them. This class gave me the opportunity

> to show you my best work. Obviously, I would make mistakes, but I didn't feel that being held against me.

Like peer group critiquing, portfolio grading is a new method for students. For many, the first, mid-semester self-evaluation is upsetting, since students are not used to evaluating themselves. I ask my students to trust me and to try out the method at mid-semester, telling them that I will revert to individually graded papers for any student who requests such grading after mid-semester. However, I have never had a student ask me to do this. Additionally, some students write excellent letters of self-evaluation and then "forget" to assign a letter grade. During conference, I'm able to talk them through this phase.

In general, I agree with about 90% of the student self-evaluations and my letters simply announce this and say why. Most of my response time is devoted to telling the student what I like about his or her work--remarks that will be listened to. In a review of research into responding to student work, C. W. Griffith notes that students "prefer a positive tone" (300) which, if you consider your own preferences, is not a surprising finding. Portfolio grading allows me to look at a student's work as a whole and to support the positive aspects of his or her writing while still discussing what remains to be done.

I said that I agreed with 90% of the self-evaluations. That leaves a disputed 10%. Surprisingly, as many of these remaining students

under-value their own writing as over-value it. In the case of under-valued student writing, I have the pleasant task of discussing a student's worth as a writer. In the case of over-valued writing, I have clear indications of why the student thinks the work is better than I think it is--often based on effort--and I can explain why and how our evaluations differ and what needs to be accomplished to reconcile our views.

I am still perfecting the critiquing and portfolio system. What I have described here for you today is simply one application of current composition theory to the technical writing class. I expect to continue to revise and reintegrate these methods into each class I teach for I've found that the more flexible and dynamic my syllabus is, the more flexible and dynamic my classes are. In this case, peer critiquing and student self-evaluation and portfolio grading allow my students to develop the necessary amount of writing fluency that I believe leads to greater writing clarity and correctness. The greatest vote of confidence for these methods comes from the student I quoted earlier who said: "This class gave me the opportunity to show you my best work. Obviously, I would make mistakes, but I didn't feel that being held against me." And it also comes from receiving student-valued, well-presented portfolios of technical writing each semester.

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Appendix 1

Interviews with Professionals

Type of Position	Amount of time writing	Types of Writing	Comments
Attorney	70% of work day	compiling and interpreting laws; composing manuscripts; correspondence; memos; notes; inter-office mail	Writing is "very important."
Captain, U.S. Marine Corps	50% of work day (1,034 hours per year)	questionnaires; forms reports	
T.V.C.C. Computer Instructor	20 hrs. week	memos; proposals; classroom assignments; personal--monthly newsletter to family & friends	word processor helps to improve his writing
Financial Broker	20 hrs. week	letters; memos; inter-office "wires"	many forms of inter-office written communication
Financial Consultant	3-5 hrs. day	inter-office memos; proposals and reports; business letters	
Professor Travel Industry	1-2 hrs. day 10-15 times per week	answering letters; intra-organizational memos; presentations; research reports	
Professor Economics	6 papers per year	proposals/and or research papers	
Laboratory supervisor	50% work time	quality control sheets; record keeping of many types; instrument evaluations employee evaluations; reports; yearly re-evaluations	
Businessmen (3)		#1 up to 100 letters per month; status reports; personal - political and economic commentary (newspapers) #2 60-90 letters per month; proposals; electronic dictation major portion of his job #3 30 letters per month; proposals; uses computer	
Math Professor		Math text book; articles for journals; writes often but wishes he had a tech writing class	
Hotel Management		acknowledgment letters; sales letters, etc.; brochure ads	
Professional Economist		internal: announcements, newsletter, memos; external: reports, brochures; speeches; policy statements	
Civil Engineer		contract specifications; correspondence; documentation	
Meteorologist		collects data from sources (computers, etc.) and writes up as reports	

Appendix 2

RESPONSE SHEETS

I'd like to discuss the weekly response sheets.

Format:

1. Please handwrite, type, or compute your response sheets as legibly as possible.
2. Write on only 1/3 to 1/2 of the page, leaving a wide right-hand margin for comments.
3. I will show you a sample sheet.
4. Label each entry with your name, date written, time started and stopped (and, if you like, where you are writing).

Generally, these sheets will be a minimum of 250-500 words. This is an informal writing exercise. Sheets will be commented on, will help to focus your class learning, but will not be graded. You either receive an A or B for strong and consistent participation or no credit for this part of your final grade if your participation has been spotty or erratic.

During certain weeks, library skills exercises will be substituted for Response Sheet writing.

I will sometimes ask you to share Response Sheets with each other at the beginning or end of class or with group members. I will collect each sheet and comment on each by the next class.
Be sure you are clear about each sheet's contents by making notes on your class schedule (pages 3 and 4).

First Response Sheet (This sheet will probably require the longest writing time of any during the semester):

There is no correct answer to any of these questions. Try to answer freely, and include the question information (that is, write in comprehensible chunks--don't answer yes or no). Your responses will help us begin to discuss writing this semester. Length depends on what you have to say but you should spend at least an hour or two to finish these. We will use your answers at our next class meeting.

1. What kinds of experiences with writing in general and with technical writing in particular have you had as a student in elementary, middle, and high school or before now in college. Have you done any writing for a job? Consider what subjects you wrote about, types of writing you did, audiences and purposes for writing, approaches and assignments you liked and disliked, how you felt about it all. In particular, what teacher helped you most with your reading and writing? In what ways? Tell stories.

2. What kinds of things do you now write or have you liked to write outside of school? Why? Who reads them? Do you like to share?

3. Writing Process

a) How do you get ideas or inspiration for writing? How do you get started? Get down to what you really do (take a walk, avoid, stare into space, make lists, what else?)

b) What conditions (time, place, etc.) for writing seem to be best for you?

c) How much do you revise as you write? after a first draft?

d) Do you write drafts in longhand, on typewriter, computer?

e) Do you need deadlines for inspiration?

4. What do you think makes writing good? What does one need to become a good, successful writer? Can everyone be a good writer?

5. Who are your favorite writers? (Anyone counts.) What do you like about their writing?

6. What would you like to learn this semester about technical writing?

7. What field (major) of technical writing do you expect to go into?

8. How often do you think professionals in that field write? How often do you think they write with others? Explain.

9. What would you like to be able to do as a result of this course?

10. Rank yourself (put these in order of importance) from 1 to 5 (use each number only once). Give the item that you are best at a 1, and the item you feel most uncomfortable about a 5.

_____ Knowledge of grammar and punctuation
_____ Leadership and group organization skills
_____ Honesty and tactfulness in helping others
_____ Creativity and risk-taking in writing
_____ Enjoyment of professional challenges; problem-solving abilities

Example:

__3__ Knowledge of grammar and punctuation
__5__ Leadership and group organization skills
__2__ Honesty and tactfulness in helping others
__1__ Creativity and risk-taking in writing
__4__ Enjoyment of professional challenges; problem-solving abilities

Appendix 3

MID-SEMESTER PORTFOLIO

Portfolio Contents

Your mid-semester portfolio will include rough, professional, and portfolio quality drafts of class work, a letter of self-evaluation, your weekly attendance log, and your response sheets and any class exercises.

On one side of your portfolio, you should include Portfolio quality drafts of the following assignments:

Correspondence (cover letter and resume, including job description))
Process Description
Definition and Classification Paper
and, OPTIONAL, one pieces of out of class
writing which demonstrates your technical writing expertise

The other side of your portfolio should include:

Rough drafts and Professional drafts
Completed weekly attendance log
Response sheet
Mid-semester self-evaluation letter prepared according to the instructions below.

Letter of Self-Evaluation

Your letter of self-evaluation should include the following:

A brief discussion of your writing (you may discuss each assignment separately or your writing growth, change, and improvement as a whole. If you do the second, still refer to pieces of writing which you feel were especially successful).

Your evaluation of your success as a class participant:
1. attendance
2. participation in group work
3. development of ability to critique the writing of others
4. completion of readings, handouts (ex. library tour, etc.)
5. completion of response sheets

Discussion of most valuable aspects of the class to you as a developing technical writer (ex. conferences, opportunity to write drafts, portfolio method, group method, readings, and so on).

Taking all of these points into consideration, assign yourself a mid-semester letter grade (portfolios which do not contain a semester self-grade will not be accepted) and explain briefly why you place your work at that grade level. (Remember, I will respond to your self-evaluation letter and take the final responsibility for grading and also remember that the mid-semester grade is a grade in process, it reflects your work so far.) Anything else that you wish to add will be appreciated.
NOTE: This letter is private, from you to me and should not be directed to other class members.

FINAL PORTFOLIOS

Preparing your portfolio: Your final portfolios will be prepared in the same manner as your mid-semester portfolios. They will include final copies of class work, draft copies, letters of self-evaluation, your weekly attendance log, and your response sheets.

On one side of your portfolio, you should include:
Portfolio quality (final) drafts of:

Correspondence (cover letter and resume)
Process Description
Definition and Classification Paper
One copy of your completed Group Report
Feasibility Report
Progress Report
Paper clipped copies of class evaluation
of your Oral Report
One copy of your Formal Report
Evaluation of (another student's) Formal Report
and, optional, up to two pieces of out of class
writing which demonstrate your technical writing expertise

The other side of your portfolio should include:

Drafts - one rough draft per assignment (in many cases, this may be the professional draft that you turned in on paper due dates and had class members and me evaluate; I would like to have rough drafts for the formal reports in addition to a professional draft--the rough draft should be the copy you brought to class for workshop several weeks ago)

Mid-semester self-evaluation and my response

Completed weekly attendance log

Response sheets and/or worksheets

Final self-evaluation letter prepared according to the instructions below. NOTE: Because I wish to get the portfolios back to you quickly, my comments on the work will be necessarily brief, especially as I've made numerous comments on drafts during the semester. In essence, I will be reading each portfolio carefully and responding briefly to your letter.

LETTER OF SELF-EVALUATION

Your letter of self-evaluation should include the following:

A brief discussion of your writing (you may discuss each assignment separately or your writing growth, change, and improvement as a whole. If you do the second, still refer to pieces of writing which you feel were especially successful).

Your evaluation of your success as a class participant:

1. attendance
2. participation in group work
3. development of ability to critique the writing of others
4. completion of readings, handouts (ex. notecard exercise and pathfinders)
5. completion of response sheet entries

Discussion of most valuable aspects of the class to you as a developing technical writer (ex. conferences, opportunity to write drafts, portfolio method, group method, readings, and so on).

Taking all of these points into consideration, assign yourself a semester grade (PORTFOLIOS WHICH DO NOT CONTAIN A SEMESTER SELF-GRADE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED) and explain briefly why you feel that grade is representative of your work.

Anything else that you wish to add or think is relevant will be appreciated.

NOTE: This letter is private, from you to me and should not be directed to other class members.